

France, from 1944 to 1952. I wonder if this debate took place in this Congress during that period of time: Bring our troops home. Why don't those people stand up a government over there? Why can't they get their act together? I wonder if that debate took place. I don't know. I might go look it up and try to find out.

Japan we defeated in 1945, unconditional surrender. And yet MacArthur established the occupation of Japan and, in fact, was heavily criticized when the Korean War broke out for still being the czar of Japan. And occupation forces remained in Japan until some time in the mid 1950s. I wonder if that debate went on about Japan. The last time I checked, which was the day before yesterday when I was talking to some soldiers at Fort Hood, we still have troops in Korea, and that war technically ended in 1954 I believe it was, 1952 or 1954, and we still have troops there. And I don't know if during the 1950s we had debates about why can't those people get their act together? Why do we have to defend that country? Why do we have to defend them? I don't hear that debate anymore, and there are still American soldiers standing watch in Korea.

I am not saying that we are going to occupy for this period of time, but where is our commitment to the commitment that our soldiers have given us? That deeply concerns me. I worry about it. And I can tell you our fighting men and women worry about it too.

So I guess that is why we get up here on the floor of the House and we want to let the American people know what we saw and what we heard and what we experienced. And I know the fighting generation that are living today; those soldiers are a great generation. The question is, will we be also ranked as a great generation, the people back home, for standing behind this great generation as they have done an outstanding job in defeating our enemy.

#### THE NATIONAL DEBT AND THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, this evening, as on most Tuesday evenings when Congress is in session, I rise on behalf of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are a group of 47 conservative to moderate Democrats that simply want to come here, put an end to the partisan bickering, and restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

This evening, as we begin this hour-long conversation, we are going to focus on Iraq, and specifically we are going to focus on how your tax dollars are being spent in Iraq.

You have heard a lot of talk this evening about Iraq. And I can assure

you as long as we have our men and women in uniform in harm's way, we are going to support them. They are doing everything that has been asked of them and then some. My brother-in-law is in the U.S. Air Force. He has been in the region several times. My first cousin is in the U.S. Army, and he is in Iraq this evening. It has affected all of us in one way or another. We have all had family or friends serve there.

This evening we are going to specifically focus on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq. For the last 5 years, the President has pretty much asked for a blank check, and if you ask him to be held accountable for how your tax money is spent in Iraq, he will tell you that you are unpatriotic. It is time that we stood up to this President and demanded the kind of accountability on how your tax money is being spent in Iraq just as we demand accountability from local and State governments when they receive a Federal grant. To put it another way, \$16 million of your tax money is being spent in Iraq every hour; \$16 million of your tax money is being spent in Iraq every hour. That is \$16 million an hour that can't go to replace the bridge in Minnesota that fell. And, by the way, there are thousands more structurally deficient bridges in this country, and this should have been a wake-up call for all of us to get about the business of rebuilding this Nation's infrastructure and begin to invest in America again.

Just in my congressional district during the month of August, some people think we go home and go on vacation for a month, but what we really do is we go home and see the people, which I think is an important part of this job. If you are going to represent folks, I think it is important you get out of Washington and you go home and you see them. And as I traveled my 29 counties and 150 towns in Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, every town I went to I learned of a project, of a need. On the western side, they want to finish I-49, which can create jobs and economic opportunities. An interstate where construction started on it back when I was about 5 years old entering kindergarten. I am now 46 and have a daughter in college.

When I go to the eastern side of my district, I hear a lot of talk about wanting to complete I-69, which was announced 5 years before I was born. In the central part of the district, I hear a lot of talk about four-laning U.S. 82, four-laning 167, how we need money to invest in getting off the Sparta aquifer and having more and more commercial and residential people getting their water from other alternative water sources. As I traveled and toured Millwood Lake, I learned about how this wonderful recreational lake, a lake that contributed to the economy, it is now becoming very difficult to fish in about a quarter of it and they are worried about the rest of it. Why? Because of the neglect. The neglect in our

Nation's infrastructure, the neglect in our waterways, in our highways. And yet we continue to spend \$16 million an hour of your tax money in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, I say it is time to start investing in America again, and we are going to talk more about that this evening.

During the past 6 years, we have had a President that has given us the largest debt ever in our Nation's history, the largest deficit ever in our Nation's history, for the past 6 years, during the time that we had Republicans controlling the White House, the House and the Senate. We have passed a budget this year that will put us back in balance by 2012 and will begin to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

But this is what the new Democratic majority inherited in January: a debt that is \$8,993,600,200,089 and some change. That is a big number. What does it mean? If you break it out and divide it by every man, woman and child living in America, including those born today, each one of us, our share of the national debt: \$29,704. It is what those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition refer to as the "debt tax," d-e-b-t, which is one tax that cannot be repealed, that cannot be cut. And that is one of the reasons that we are not able to invest in America's priorities, investing in our homeland, investing in our veterans, investing in education, investing in rebuilding America's infrastructure. No. We are too busy paying interest on this debt.

Our Nation is borrowing about a billion dollars a day, but before we borrow a billion dollars today, we are going to spend a half billion today paying interest on the debt we have already got. That is above and beyond the \$16 million an hour that we are sending to Iraq, much of which goes unaccounted for.

So we are going to spend this hour addressing that and other issues surrounding Iraq. And I am absolutely delighted to be joined by a number of my Blue Dog colleagues. I mentioned there are 47 members in the Blue Dog Coalition, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the four newest members: CHRISTOPHER CARNEY from Pennsylvania's Tenth Congressional District, GABRIELLE GIFFORDS from Arizona's Eighth Congressional District, BART GORDON from Tennessee's Sixth Congressional District, and ZACH SPACE from Ohio's Eighteenth Congressional District.

At this time I am pleased to yield to a fellow Blue Dog, someone who has become very involved in this conservative-moderate Democratic movement on Capitol Hill, someone who is not afraid to take a stand for what is right, and that is my friend JOE DONNELLY from Indiana's Second Congressional District.

Mr. DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. ROSS.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor to have the chance to speak here again in the House.